

Department of Fish & Wildlife Hunter Education Division **An Overview**

David Whipple
Hunter Education Division Manager

June 2017

Outline

- The Hunter Education Division
 - Staff
 - Budget
 - Overview of Programs
- The Two Largest Programs
 - Hunter Education Program
 - Master Hunter Permit Program (MHPP)

Hunter Education Division

Hunter Education Division

Staffing

- 11 staff (9.8 FTEs)
 - 5 HQ Staff
 - Administration
 - Customer Service
 - Warehouse Operations
 - 6 Regional Staff
 - Hunter Education Coordination
 - Volunteer Coordination

Hunter Education Division

Budget

- Biennial Budget (approx.)
 - \$2.3M Pittman-Robertson Funds (annual grants)
 - \$43k Wildlife State
 - \$28k Hunter Education Deferral (restricted)
 - \$71k Master Hunter Permit Program (restricted)
 - \$57k Firearm Permit Account (restricted)

Hunter Education Division

Programs

- Hunter Education
- Master Hunter Permit Program
- Trapper Education
- Bowhunter Education
- National Archery in the Schools Program
- Shooting range development
- Hunter recruitment, retention & reactivation



Hunter Education Division Programs

Trapper Education

- Trapper Education - required for 1st-time trappers
 - Recreational trappers
 - Wildlife Control Operators
 - 167 students in 2016
- Curriculum
 - Trapping history; regulations
 - Furbearer biology & management
 - Traps & other equipment
 - Health & safety
 - Etc.
- Classroom & home study options
- Partnership w/ WA State Trappers Association
- Recently revised/updated student manual, teaching PowerPoint, & test

Trapper Education in Washington State

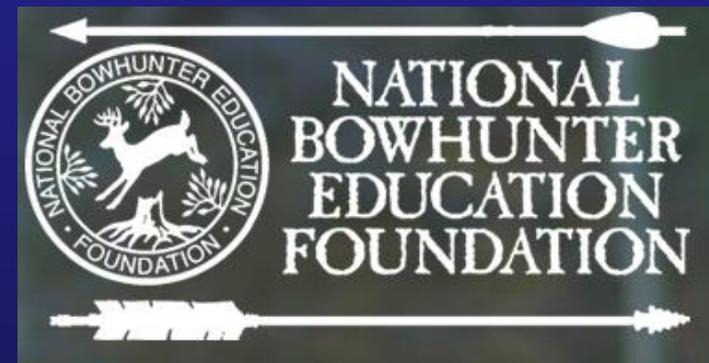


Washington Department
of Fish and Wildlife
Wildlife Program
Hunter Education Division
March 2017

Hunter Education Division Programs

Bowhunter Education

- Bowhunter education - not required to archery hunt
 - 156 students in 2016
- Curriculum
 - Based on National Bowhunter Education Foundation curriculum
 - Equipment, game anatomy, tracking, safety, regulations, etc.
 - Meets reciprocity for states requiring bowhunter education (12)
- Options:
 - Traditional; classroom w/ field component
 - Online course w/ field component
- WDFW Partners
 - Washington State Archery Association
 - Traditional Bowhunters of Washington
 - Washington State Bowhunters



Hunter Education Division Programs

National Archery in the Schools Program

- Administered by WA State Archery Association w/ WDFW PR dollars
- Target archery taught in grades 4-12 by teachers certified in NASP
- Started in 2005
- 154 schools to-date
- Approx. 28,000 students/year
- Introduced the 3D Challenge this year
 - 66% of NASP students want (nationally)
 - 56% want to know bowhunting (nationally)



Hunter Education Division Programs

Shooting Ranges

- Focus: develop or improve recreational shooting opportunities on WDFW land, where appropriate, to:
 - Serve public needs and interests to the extent possible
 - Improve public safety
 - Improve habitat protection
 - Reduce fire risk
 - Reduce littering
- Wenas Wildlife Area
 - Formed citizen advisory committee to recommend solutions
- Other possible opportunities
 - Sherman Creek Wildlife Area
 - Asotin Creek Wildlife Area
 - Wooten Wildlife Area



Hunter Education Division Programs

Hunter Recruitment, Retention, & Reactivation (R3)



- Declining hunting participation a national issue
- Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports
 - National R3 Plan
 - Assistance to develop state plans
- Goal: develop R3 plan to guide & focus beneficial agency efforts
- Complex, large undertaking
- WDFW currently involved w/ R3 activities

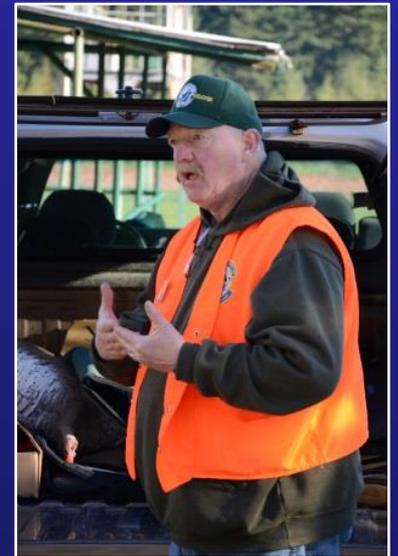
Hunter Education Program



Hunter Education Program

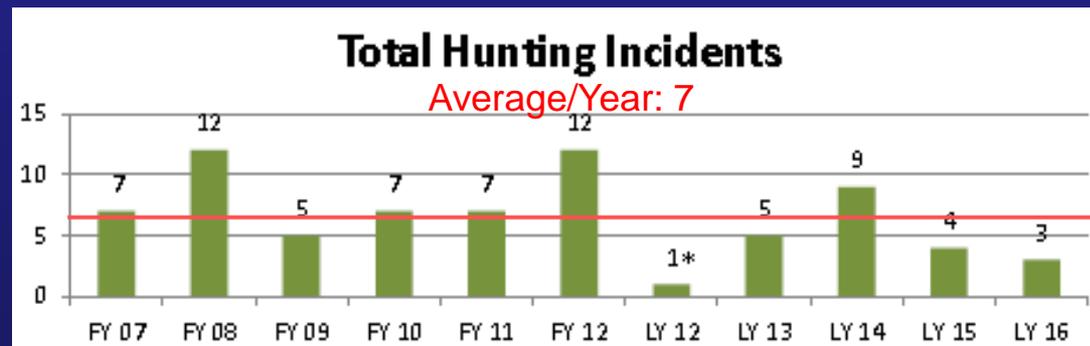
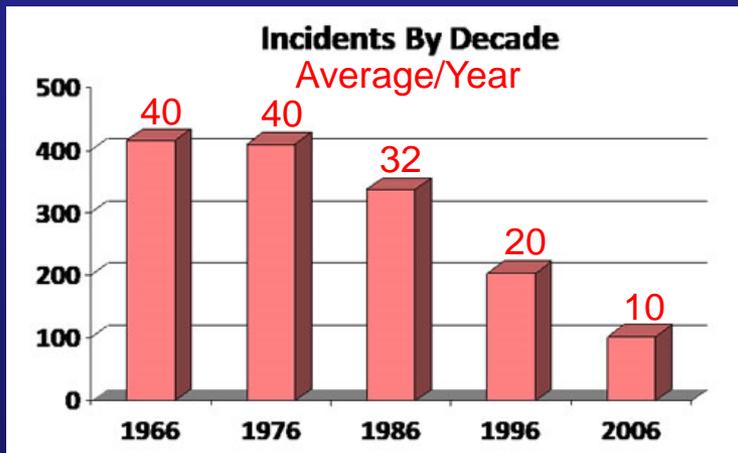
Hunter Education Division Staff

- 11 staff
- 7 FTEs
- 5 HQ Staff (3.2 FTEs)
 - Management / Administration
 - Customer Service (instructors & students)
 - Warehouse Operations
- 6 Regional Staff (3.8 FTEs)
 - Hunter Education Field Coordinators



Hunter Education Program

- Hunter Education required for 1st time WA hunters born after January 1, 1972
 - Became a requirement in 1957
 - Reciprocity with all states, Canadian provinces, & Mexico
 - Dramatic decreases in hunting incidents



Hunter Education Program

- Curriculum
 - Firearms, ammunition, firearm safety
 - Archery equipment & safety
 - Wildlife ID & conservation
 - Sportsmanship / ethics
 - Hunting regulations
 - Survival / First aid



Hunter Education Program

Classes & Students

		Traditional Course	Online Course
	Setting	Classroom & field	Online course + field
	Hours (avg.)	15 (class + field)	Self-paced online + 4 field
2016 Statistics	Classes (746)	38%	62%
	Students Registered (13,569)	44%	56%
	Student pass rate (11,176)	81%	83% (field portion only)
	Student fail rate	4%	1% (field portion only)
	Student no-show rate	12%	16%

Hunter Education Program

Hunter Education Deferral

- “Try before you buy”
- Pressure relief valve in periods of peak demand for classes
- One-year, once-time deferral of hunter education training
- Specific requirements for deferred & accompanying hunters
- 800-1,100 deferrals/year
- **2016 WAC changes significantly streamlined application process**



Hunter Education Program

Exemptions

- Military Exemption
 - Current & retired members of U.S. military exempt from field skills component of the online course.
 - 1,000 exemptions/year
- Peace Officer Exemption
 - SHB 1944 (2017)
 - Extends exemption to current & retired peace officers who have had firearm training

Hunter Education Program

Instructors

- 1,000 volunteer instructors
 - 250 Chief Instructors; manage 200 teams
 - Average 750 classes/year
 - 32,000 volunteer hours in 2016
 - Complete PR grant match; no state \$\$\$
- WDFW Instructor Advisory Committee
 - 15 members + 2 non-voting (WHEIA, HERO)
 - Regional representation; communications link w/ instructors
- Incentive permits & multi-season permits (via FWC action)



Hunter Education Program

Instructor Awards

- Terry Hoffer Memorial Firearm Safety Award
 - Officer Terry Hoffer, 1984
 - Awarded to instructor for “above & beyond”
- International Hunter Education Association (IHEA-USA)
 - Volunteer Hunter Education Instructor of the Year
 - 2014: Steve Mills, Region 5
 - 2016: Cathy Lynch, Region 4
- Agency Awards
 - 2015: Cathy Lynch (R4), Educator of the Year award
 - 2017: Norma & Loren Holthaus (R2), Educators of the Year
- Hunter Education Regional Coordinator's Award
 - New in 2017
 - Critical contributions

Hunter Education Program

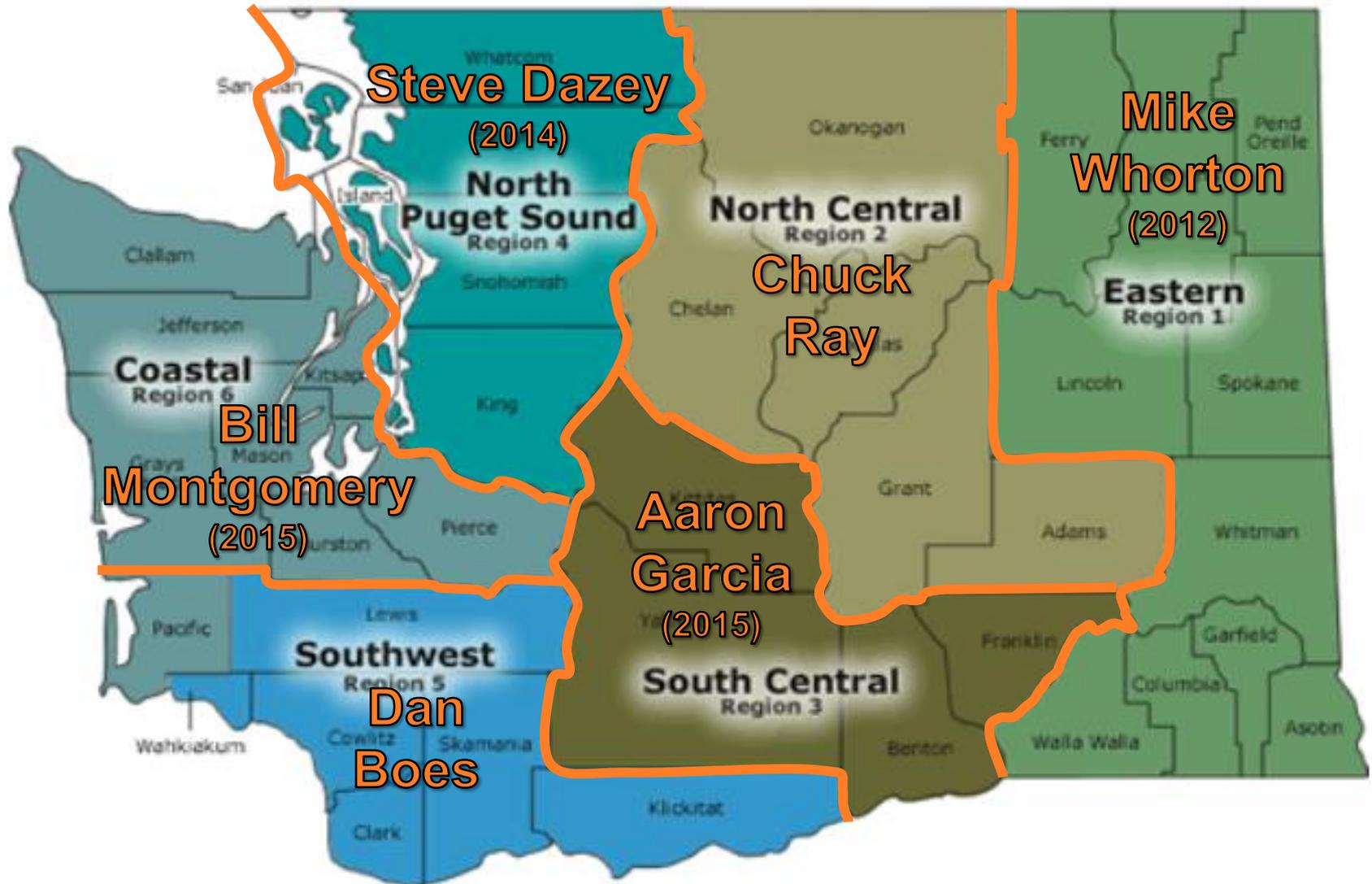
Instructor Awards



Howard Gardner, 60 years

Hunter Education Program

Investments & Trends



Hunter Education Program

Investments

- Better furnishing instructors w/ equipment, supplies
- Some results (2016 vs. 2013):
 - 25% ↑ in # certified instructors (970)
 - 30% ↑ in # new instructors (>100)
 - 15% ↑ in instructor volunteer hours donated (>32,000)
 - 20% ↑ in # classes offered (750)
- Significant process streamlining of Hunter Ed Deferral
 - FWC rule adoption, April 2016



Hunter Education Program

Investments

- Hunting clinics, youth hunts, mentored hunts
 - 22 clinics
 - Pheasant (Pheasants Forever, Cabela's)
 - Turkey (National Wildlife Turkey Federation)
 - Mule deer
 - Bow hunting
 - 300+ students
 - WDFW tracking license purchases
- Female hunter education classes



Hunter Education Program

Investments

- National Hunting & Fishing Day
 - 4th Saturday in September
 - 2015: Cowlitz Public Shooting Range
 - 2016: North Central WA Shooting Range
 - 2017:
 - Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association
 - Camp Pigott, Region 4



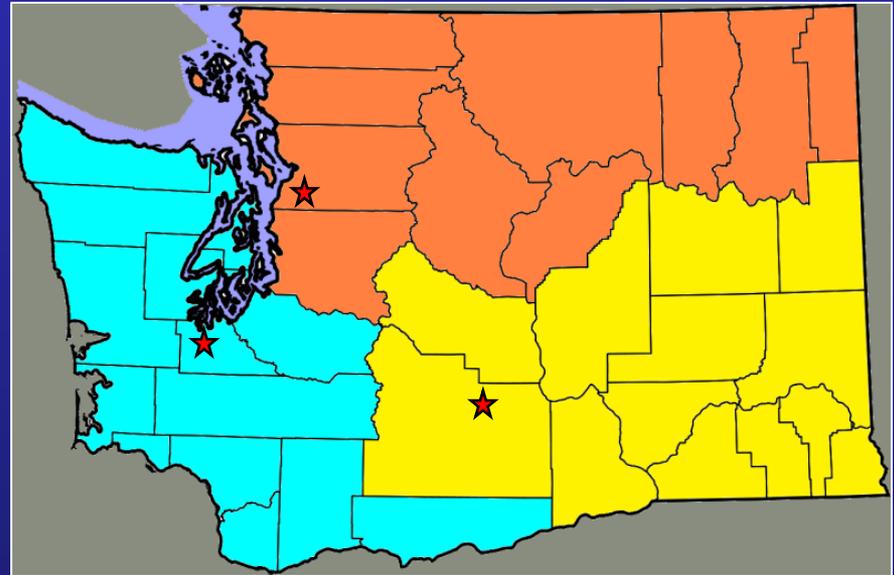
Master Hunter Permit Program



Master Hunter Permit Program (MHPP)

Hunter Education Division Staff

- 7 staff
- 2.8 FTEs
- 4 HQ (1.8 FTEs)
 - Division Manager
 - MHPP Liaison/Coordinator
 - Customer service
 - Warehouse
- 3 Regional (1 FTE)
 - Coordinators w/ volunteer coordination duties



MHPP

Historical Context

- 1992: Advanced Hunter Education Program
 - Goal: help address significant wildlife damage claims
 - Special hunts for AHE participants
 - Increased program participants
 - Likely attracted some participants for less than desired motives
- WDFW Assessment: Initial Success
 - Helped save millions of dollars in crop damage claims
 - Needed program improvements identified

MHPP

Historical Context

- FWC Policy C-6005, Dec. 2007
 - WDFW will develop a Master Hunter Program that provides adequate number of hunters, w/ specific qualifications, to address deer & elk agricultural damage, address concentrated vehicle accidents, & nuisance deer, elk, turkey, geese etc.
 - Master Hunters are role models for hunting community, & act as ambassadors for WDFW



MHPP

Historical Context

- 2008: FWC adopted rules
 - Master Hunter Permit Program
 - Master Hunter suspension criteria
 - Master Hunter Advisory Group (MHAG)
 - Included significant implementation changes over AHE
- 2009: Legislative authority under RCW
 - Mimics WACs



MHPP

Historical Context

- Wildlife Program Policy Statement, Oct. 2013
 - Goal: Enhance internal & external exposure & support for MHPP
 - Directs WLP staff to work on meaningful volunteer opportunities
 - To promote the conservation ethic
 - To address WDFW priority needs



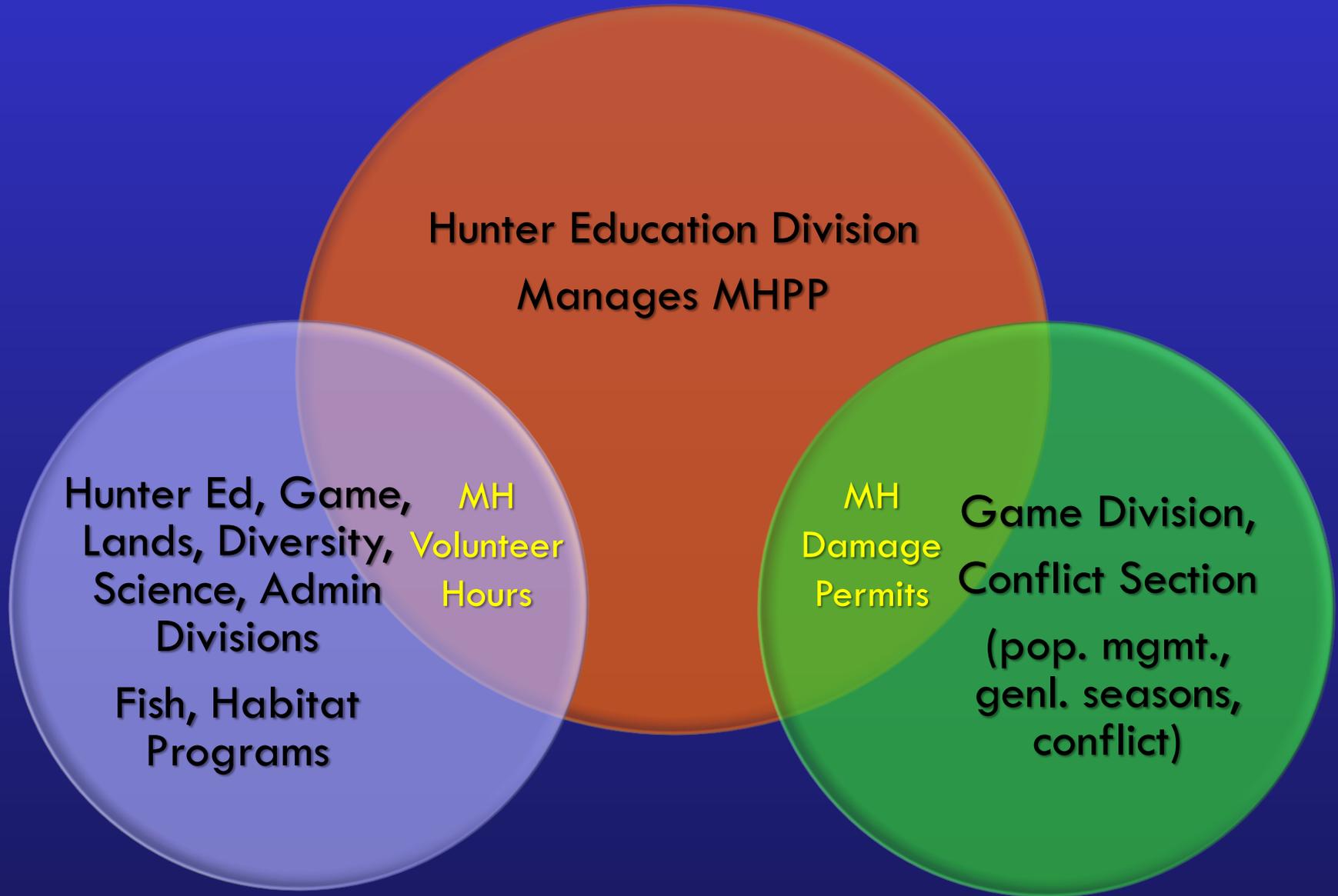
MHPP

Historical Context

Wildlife Program Policy (cont.)

- Master Hunters will be used to help strengthen & improve:
 - The conservation ethic and the image & heritage of hunting in WA
 - Landowner relations through ethical & responsible hunting
 - WDFW's ability to address human/wildlife conflicts
 - Hunter access to private lands via volunteer efforts
 - WDFW wildlife areas & water access sites
 - Public knowledge of WDFW wildlife & hunting activities
- Master Hunters will also:
 - Help teach hunter education & hunting clinics, mentoring
 - Participate in Citizen Science data collection
 - Administer or coordinate other volunteers & projects

How Master Hunters Are Used



Master Hunters Help Address Damage

- Master Hunter general seasons
 - Elk Area 3911, etc.
- Master Hunter special permits
 - Help address deer, elk, moose damage
 - Many are Hunt Coordinator Hunts



Master Hunters as Volunteers

- Game Species Projects

- Deer & elk hazing
 - Kittitas Co., Yakima Co. elk
 - Cheney/Sprague deer
- Fencing
 - I-90 Ryegrass elk fence/flad
 - S
 - W
 - Oak

- Volunteer

- Fawn co
- Game farm pen
- Pheasant releases
- Bear trap repair (welding)

- Admin Projects

- Scanning photos to digital form

- Diversity Species Projects

- Pond turtle captures
- Pygmy rabbit captures
- Snowy plover nest guarding (clam season)
- Nest box construction

- Spotted frog pond brush

1,650 Master Hunters
10,000-30,000 hours/year
(5-15 FTEs)

- Wenas, Oak Creek WLA clean-up
- Wenas target shooting use surveys
- Oak Creek elk winter closure signing
- General litter pick-up, maintenance
- Parking lot, fence repairs
- Down tree removal, weed abatement

Number of Master Hunters

Certified Master Hunters by Year

	2011	2012	2013*	2014	2015	2016
Applicants	708	510	0	521	375	317
Applicants certified	132	83	2*	135	97	89
Percent certified	19%	16%	n/a	26%	26%	28%
Total Master Hunters	1,975	1,938	1,815	1,701	1,650	1,648

* There were two applicants from 2012 that were not certified until 2013 due to administrative issues.

The percentage of Master Hunters renewing their certification has remained relatively constant. Over the last six years it has averaged approximately 57%.

Master Hunter Renewal Rates by Year**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Certification renewals	163	210	207	221	250	198
Non-renewals	140	144	145	224	169	104
Renewal Rate	54%	59%	59%	50%	60%	66%

** These numbers are approximations due to the fluidity of the Master Hunter renewals.

MHPP Improvements

- MHPP Strategic Plan
 - Developed w/ Master Hunter Advisory Group
 - Improve image of Master Hunters
 - Outreach & education activities
 - Mentoring / coaching
- Website information re-focus
- MHPP Orientations (2015-2017)
 - For MHs, MH applicants, landowners, public
 - History, goals, expectations, challenges
 - Guidance: damage permits, volunteer projects
- MHs as hunting mentors
- MH newsletters
 - Educate re: agency work (Game, Diversity, Lands, etc.)
 - Promote role as ambassadors
 - Highlight volunteer opportunities



MHPP Improvements

- WDFW Staff Workshop; HE, Conflict & Private Lands
 - ID issues and improvements
 - Damage permits
 - Volunteer projects
- Damage permit administration
 - Enhance consistency
 - Ease some administrative work
- Volunteer Projects; E. WA Roadshow
 - Increase # projects where possible
 - Utilize MH expertise (e.g. welding, woodworking)
 - Volunteer hour tracking
- **2017 FWC Action – HC damage hunts**
 - **Points restoration for MHs drawn but no opportunity**



Questions?

Division staff, budget

Hunter Education Program

Master Hunter Permit Program

Trapper, Bowhunter Education

National Archery in the Schools Program

Shooting ranges

Hunter recruitment, retention & reactivation

